

## Reps. Maloney & Nadler Urge OMB to Deliver 9/11 Health Funds Now

Friday, 14 May 2010

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Reps. Carolyn Maloney and Jerrold Nadler are urging Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Peter Orszag to approve contracts and funding for federal programs to treat and monitor the health of those who were exposed to toxins released by the 9/11 attacks. In a letter dated yesterday to Orszag (a copy of which can be found below), Maloney and Nadler note that the World Trade Center responder health program, the 9/11 Mental Health and Substance Use Benefit Program, and the World Trade Center Health Registry will all have to cease operating in the near future unless OMB makes the contract and funding approvals, some of which have been pending for seven months.

Maloney and Nadler today released the following joint statement on the need for OMB to take action:

"OMB needs to get moving to keep the doors open at 9/11 health clinics. There is no excuse for continued bureaucratic delays that threaten badly-needed medical care for 9/11 responders, area residents, and others who have serious illnesses caused by the attacks on our nation. We urge OMB to make these approvals swiftly and ensure that the World Trade Center health programs will continue without interruption."

May 12, 2010

Mr. Peter Orszag

Director

The Office of Management and Budget

725 17th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Orszag,

We write to express our grave concern about the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Obama Administration's continued delays in approving funding for the World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program's Centers of Excellence, which provide care for WTC responders and survivors with WTC-related illnesses. Without action from OMB soon, patients will need to be informed that their care will not continue.

All of the six clinical centers and two data centers that make up the WTC responder program in New York City will end on June 30 of this year unless their existing cooperative agreements are extended for another year. Health and Human Services Secretary Sebelius informed the New York Delegation in January of this year that it was her plan to provide for these extensions, and all of the centers have submitted their applications. However with less than seven weeks remaining in their current contracts, OMB has still not approved these extensions.

Without this approval, the centers will soon be forced to begin notifying their staff about potential layoffs and notifying their patients that the clinics will no longer be able to provide them with treatment for their WTC-related health conditions. The physicians at these centers have a moral and legal obligation to give their patients adequate notice in order for the patients to be able to make alternative arrangements for their care. All of the clinics must begin preparing such notices within the next few weeks.

In addition to the WTC responder program, the City of New York is awaiting final approval for \$3.5 million in federal funding for its 9/11 Mental Health and Substance Use Benefit Program. As you have discussed personally with Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the program provides mental health coverage for those affected by the World Trade Center attacks and continues a similar program funded by the Red Cross. Although the City developed its proposal in collaboration with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the funding request has been pending for over seven months. If this award is not finalized soon, the program may not be able to provide needed mental health services through the end of the year.

Approval for funding for the World Trade Center Health Registry is also pending. The WTC Health Registry gathers information about the physical and mental health status of registrants who were exposed to environmental contaminants for up to 20 years through regular health surveys and detailed studies. Without a finalized budget that provides for adequate funding, the Registry will have to eliminate an upcoming 2010-2011 survey that would ascertain health impacts 10 years post-9/11. It also would be unable to support ongoing research on cancers and other potentially emerging conditions.

Please advise us of the reasons for the delays in these three programs and why your agency continues to withhold funding. These responders sacrificed their health for our country, and there is no excuse for the continued bureaucratic delays that threaten their badly needed medical care.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN B. MALONEY

JERROLD NADLER

Members of Congress